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CONVICTS IN THE ARMY.

Frenchmen Condemned for Crimes Have a Hard Time of It.

A very painful sensation has been created in Paris, and will no doubt extend throughout the country, by the report of a court-martial just held at Tunis. Before recounting the facts, it is requisite to explain that there exists in the French possessions in North Africa a special body of troops, technically described as "compagnies de discipline," and dubbed in military parlance by the quaint appellation of "Bilrid." This force is composed exclusively of bad and incorrigible characters. Conscripts who, when the time comes for their incorporation in the army, happen to be serving a time of penal servitude are not sent to the regular infantry, but to these disciplinary companies, and noted offenders in the line regiments at home or in Algeria are also drafted into the penal corps. The punishments are of a peculiarly severe and inhuman description. Having said this much, I proceed to lay before you a statement of the case from the pen of a noted supporter of the Government, Senator Ranc. He says:

"A soldier of the Third African battalion, Chedel by name, has met his death from ill treatment. The minister of war ordered an inquiry, which led to a lieutenant, a sergeant and a corporal being brought before a court-martial. They have just been tried and unanimously acquitted. Chedel, who was in a bad state of health, was locked up in a cell where the temperature stood at 50 degrees centigrade, or 122 degrees Fahrenheit. He was deprived of water. He was, moreover, subjected to la crapaudine—that is to say, his feet and hands were tied together behind his back. In addition a gag was placed in his mouth. First, a common tent peg was used for the purpose, and then a tent peg with a handkerchief wrapped around it. Finally a stone was forced into his mouth. These horrors were not denied. The judges examined the surgeon of the battalion and asked him what Chedel had died of. The question strikes one as a lugubrious joke. The accused urged in their defense that the gag was a usual punishment in the battalion by direction of the commanding officer. The offense of the man thus barbarously tortured to death was an attempt to desert.—London Standard.

Uses for Old Corks.

Corks are thrown away in great quantities, and very few people think that there is any value attached to that material after it has served its purpose once as stopper of a bottle. Nevertheless it has become one of the most valuable components of a city's refuse, great quantities of used corks are now used again in the manufacture of insulating covers of steam pipes and boilers, of ice boxes and ice houses and other points to be protected from the influence of heat. Powdered cork is very useful for filling in horse collars, and the very latest application of this material is the filling in of pneumatic tires with cork shavings. Mats for bath-rooms are made of cork exclusively, and it also goes into the composition of linoleum. Cheap life preservers are now filled exclusively with bottle stoppers, cut into little pieces.

Pottery 13,000 Years Old.

In digging out the colossal statue of Ramesses II. nine feet and four inches of Nile mud had to be removed before the platform was reached. It is known that this platform was laid in the year 1861 B. C., when Ramesses was still living. Therefore three and one-half inches of accumulated Nile mud represents the lapse of a century, it being known that 3,200 years have passed since the platform was put down. Under that platform was found thirty feet more of Nile mud, before the original sandy soil was reached, hence 10,000 years must have elapsed from the time of the Nile's first overflow down to the time of Ramesses II. The curious part of the story is this: Pottery and fragments of the same were found on the original sandy soil thirty feet under the base of the statue, which shows that the Egyptians understood the potter's art not less than 13,000 years ago.

Fusell's Opinion.

Probably no two artists ever criticised each other more severely than did Fusell and Northcote; yet they remained fast friends. At one time Fusell was looking at Northcote's painting of the angel meeting Balaam and his ass. "How do you like it?" asked Northcote, after a long silence. "Northcote," replied Fusell, promptly, "you're an angel at an ass, but an ass at an angel!"

Polliwogs have been tested by electricity recently. One placed in a cell containing water and supplied with electrodes wagged his tail when the current was sent in the direction from head to tail, but kept still when it was reversed. A number of them in a large trough were greatly excited when the current was first turned on, but soon came to rest, lying in the direction of the current.

The prefect of police of St. Petersburg has just granted permission to a lady to ride a bicycle in the streets of the city. This is the first occasion on which such a privilege has been accorded. Before getting the permission the lady had to satisfy the authorities that she could ride a bicycle with safety.